

Elizabeth F. MAZUREK **Abdicating Judgment: Generic Identity and the Proem to *Fasti* 6**

This paper discusses the significance of *Fasti* 6.1-100 as an allegorical site for the poet to review the unique generic identity of his poem. I will focus on the narrator's explicit comparison of the episode—an etymological contest between Juno, Juventas and Concordia concerning the name of June—to the Judgment of Paris (e.g., 6.15-16; 6.99-100) and will consider the passage against Ovid's treatments of the judgment elsewhere in his erotic elegy (e.g., *Her.* 16.53-88; *Ars Am.* 1.245-48, 1.623-28; *Rem. Am.* 709-14). A brief summary of these comparative passages will establish Ovid's use of the Judgment of Paris as a dramatic vehicle for exploring the relationship of elegy (Venus) to epic (Juno and Athena), and the relationship of the poet (Paris) to his chosen genre. More specifically, I will show that the myth allows Ovid to imagine an alternative literary history in which elegy and epic develop simultaneously from the moment of Paris' fateful choice, and that the choice itself figures an active role for the elegiac poet in forging his own generic path.

Applying this programmatic reading of the Judgment to the proem of *Fasti* 6, my discussion will examine the counterpoint between the Roman goddesses of the *Fasti* and their competing arguments on the one hand, and the goddesses of the original myth and the enticements they offer to Paris on the other. Juno's offering of *regna* (*Her.* 16.81) is translated in her *Fasti* speech into a deep concern for her privileged status as *regina* and *princeps dearum* (6.37). Athena's offering of *virtus* (*Her.* 16.81) emerges in Juventas' speech in the person of her husband Hercules, whose feats of strength she emphasizes (6.77-82), and in the martial spirit of the young men of Rome (*pugnare paratior*, 6.85) whom she represents. Venus' gift of Helen (*Her.* 16.83-86), a foreigner whom Paris must abduct from her husband and family, finds a clear counterpart in the Sabine women whose rape is implied by Concordia in her narration of the inter-marriage between Romans and Sabines (6.93-96). If the poet of the *Fasti* were to continue following the script of Paris' judgment, he would logically conclude the episode by choosing a winner. The fact that he declines to do so (6.99-100), however, suggests that none of the goddesses represents a poetic form commensurate with his distinctive brand of elegy. (Most scholars agree that, despite Ovid's experimentation with various genres within the *Fasti*, elegy remains the poem's generic center of gravity. See especially J. F. Miller, Frankfurt am Main 1991, and S. Hinds, *Arethusa* 1992, 81-112.)

Although each goddess shows some sensitivity in her own way to the poet's elegiac project—Juno's programmatic remark, “*ause per exiguous magna referre modos*,” (6.22), Juventas' rhetorical strategy of flattery and pleading (6.70-71), Concordia's artful hair-style (6.91-92)—her argument nevertheless stresses divine majesty, heroism or conquest in manifestly epic style. This literary interpretation of the poet's reluctance to assert an opinion on the grounds of generic disagreement complements political readings of *Fasti* 6 which cite the poet's increasing hesitancy as a symptom of imperial control over free speech and cultural tradition in Augustan Rome (see, e.g., C. Newlands, Cornell 1995, 78-80.)